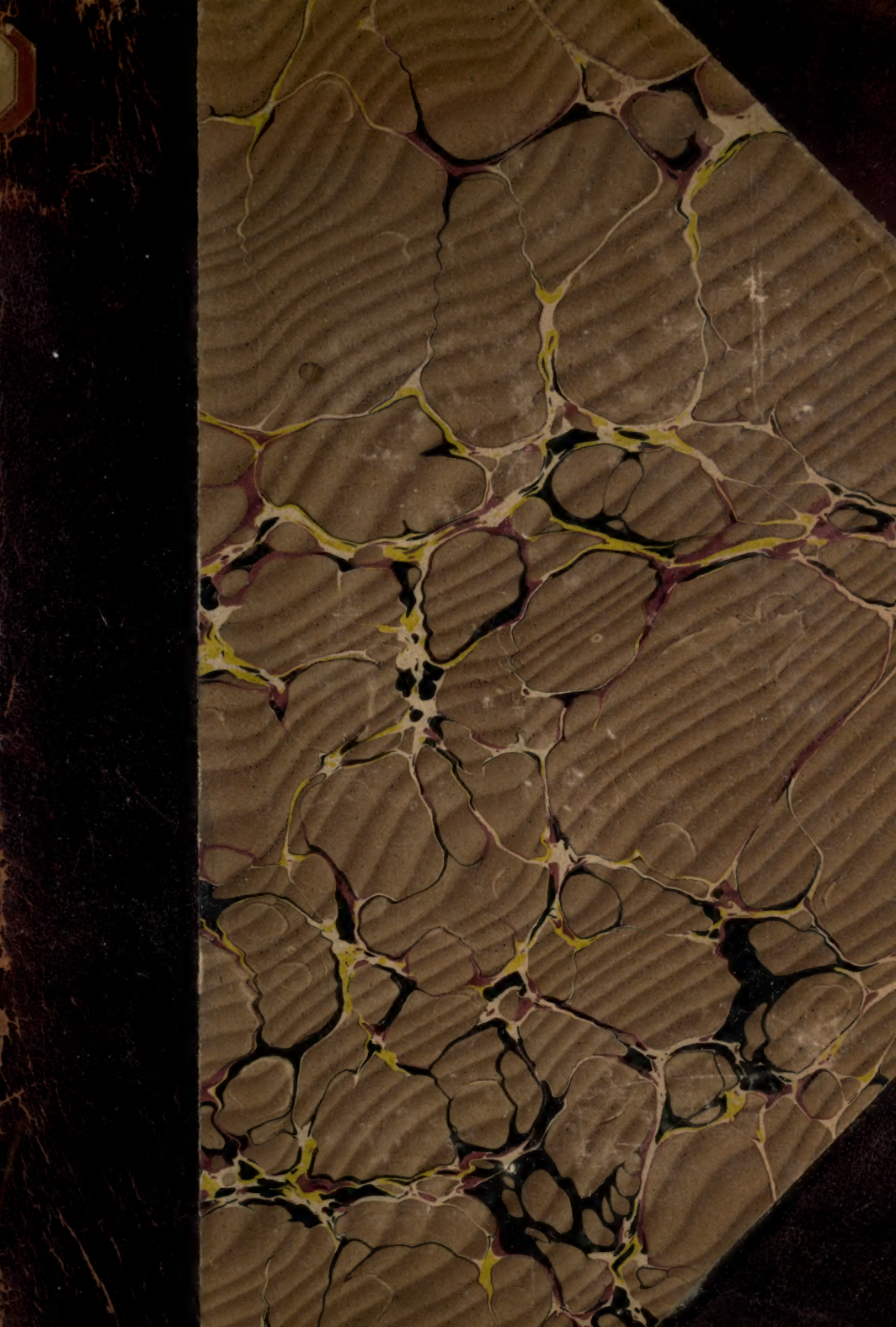
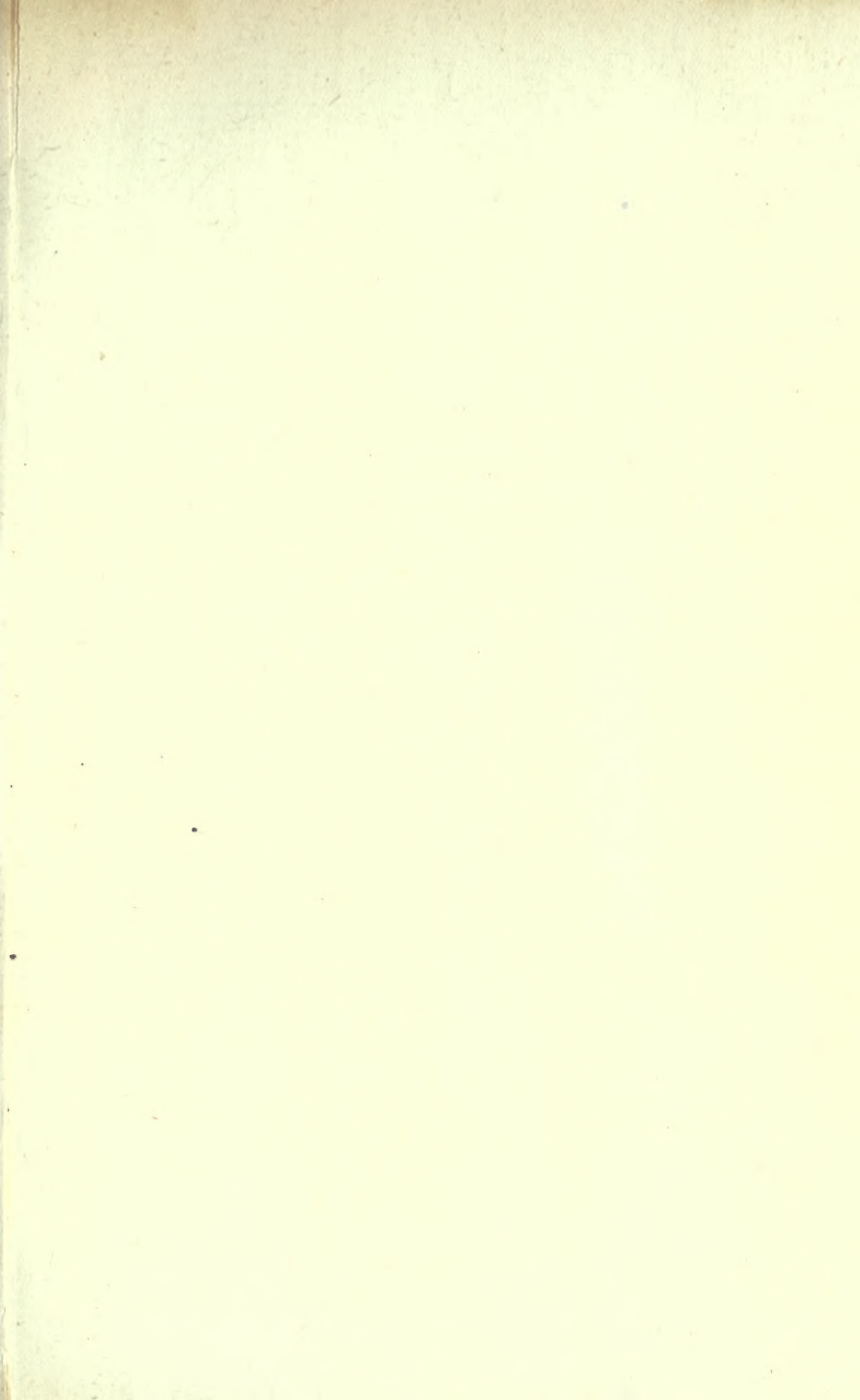




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ORIGIN
OF THE
CORNWALL and WILLIAMSBURG
CANALS.

Paper Written by

MRS. L. N. RHÉAUME,

And Read at the Monthly Meeting of the
Women's Canadian Historical
Society of Ottawa,

On the 10th of January, 1908.



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G. B. Lawrence

Attorney
Feb 10th 1908

Origin of the Cornwall and Williamsburg Canals.

MADAM PRESIDENT AND LADIES :

The Cornwall Canal is situated on the North shore of the St. Lawrence. It extends from the Town of Cornwall to Dickinson's Landing, a distance of eleven miles, and was built to overcome the "Long Sault" rapid. This rapid is the greatest of the really remarkable ones of the St. Lawrence River, being nine miles long.

The St. Lawrence, or, as they called it formerly, "La Grande Rivière," was the original first route followed by the French explorers on their way to Lake Ontario, called then "Skaniadona" (an Indian name for Ontario). These names are recorded in a map preserved in the Imperial French Library. As Jacques Cartier entered the bay on the 10th of August, 1535, he gave to the river the name of the Saint whose festival is celebrated by the Church on that day, and called it St. Lawrence. The French explorers also gave the names to the other rapids, but I will only mention those in connection with my subject.

The "Long Sault" literally means a long water fall. The next in order is "Rapide Plat," meaning a flat rapid ; and the third, "Les Galops," signifies a swift or galloping current. These names have almost lost their original signification by being either mispronounced or mis-spelt. For instance, you will hear generally, or see in print, "The Long Soo" instead of "Le Long Sault," "Rapid du Plate" for "Rapide Plat," "The Galoose" instead of "Les Galops." It is to be regretted that these descriptive names should thus lose their signification.

Smith, in his description of Upper Canada, 1799, describes the navigation of that time as being in a very primitive stage. The river was very dangerous because of its numerous rapids and the entire absence of canals. The only means of conveyance was by canoes, or batteaux. The batteaux were about thirty feet long, flat at stern and bow. The crew consisted of a captain and five or six men, who pushed the boat up the stream with long wooden poles, whose points were protected by iron. When the current was too strong for them to make headway, some of the men would go on shore and tow the boat up with a rope, two remaining on board to steer and keep her off the shore. The captain stood in the stern and steered with a large paddle. Each batteau had a moveable mast and a square sail.

This mode of navigation continued till 1809, when the Durham boat came from the Mohawk River. It was somewhat larger and more powerful than the batteau, and to a certain extent supplanted it, as a means of conveyance. The bow of the Durham boat was round and the stern square. It was steered with a

long rudder, had a stationary mast, with a main sail, jib and top sail, and it was fitted with a slip keel or centre board.

The mode of conveying merchandise from Montreal at that time, was by cartage as far as Lachine, thence by boat to Kingston, which was then the head of the boat service. The goods were then transhipped into schooners for transport up through the lakes. Very small canals had been built to overcome the worst part of the "Long Sault" and "Galops" rapids. The boats were towed by oxen or horses, the goods being first unloaded and carted to the head of the rapid.

The lots in the front concessions were surveyed into narrow strips, in order to secure a water frontage for as many as possible, because there was then no other means of transit than by water. Most persons going to Montreal from Cornwall took passage on batteaux in preference to driving. The traveller would have to wait at the river bank until a batteau hove in sight, when he was paddled out in a canoe to meet it. A bargain was struck with the captain, and the traveller was then made as comfortable as the means of the boat crew would allow. There were no berths and each one was obliged to provide his blankets and food. The batteaux were manned by French-Canadians, and it was both picturesque and pleasant to hear them sing their songs, as they plied their oars and their boats glided down the river.

Caniff, in his History, relates an account of the experience of a clergyman crossing the St. Lawrence from St. Regis (an Indian settlement) in 1811. To use the clergyman's words, he says: "We crossed the St. Lawrence in a most romantic style. We hired four Indians to paddle us over. They lashed three canoes together and put our horses in them, their fore feet in one canoe and their hind feet in another. It certainly was a very singular sight. They were to take us over for three dollars, as the distance was nearly three miles; but when reaching Cornwall the Indians claimed an extra dollar, saying that they could not easily divide three into four. This was cheerfully given, and we were only too happy to have reached shore safely."

In 1824-1825 a small boat was placed between Cornwall and Coteau du Lac. In 1828-1829 the next steamboat was the "Neptune." The steamboats of the olden days were very different from those now in use. They had no saloons or cabins on deck for passengers. The gentlemen's and ladies' cabins were both below the deck, the latter being in a small apartment at the stern of the boat. The passengers' meals were served in the gentlemen's cabin.

In 1830 the steamboat "Iroquois" began to ply between Prescott and Dickinson's Landing. She was replaced in 1832 by the "Dolphin," a larger and more commodious boat. The use of these boats did away with the stage drives between Prescott and Dickinson's Landing, leaving only twelve miles of a drive to Cornwall.

As far back as 1817, the Governor of Upper Canada, in his speech at the opening of the Legislature, called the attention of Parliament to the important question of navigation below Prescott. In 1818 a Joint Commission was appointed by the Governments of Upper and Lower Canada, which commission reported in

favour of improvement. The question, however, remained in abeyance, and it was not till the 13th of February, 1833, that the improvement of navigation was authorized by the Statute 3 William IV, Chap. 18, under which a sum of £70,000 was to be raised by a loan, not exceeding five per cent., for that purpose, and the following gentlemen were appointed Commissioners to carry the Act into effect : The Hon. Thomas Clark, Hon. Judge Hamilton, Philip VanKoughnet, Jonas Jones, Hiram Norton, George Longley and Peter Shaver. The Act directed that the improvement should begin and be finished between the head of the "Long Sault" and Cornwall, in the Eastern district, before any money could be laid out for the improvements in any other parts of the River St. Lawrence. The Commissioners entered at once upon their duties, caused further surveys to be made and adopted the line in which the canal now runs.

The services of Mr. J. B. Mills, Royal Engineer, were secured. In December of the same year, Mr. J. B. Mills made the report of the first survey to the Board of Commissioners, to ascertain whether it was practicable to improve the navigation of the St. Lawrence in such a manner as to accommodate steamboats and other vessels, by means of one or more canals, between Montreal and Prescott. He says in his report : "The estimated distance between Montreal and Prescott is 135 miles ; 103½ miles is good for steam navigation, and 31½ miles needs improvement, of which 15½ miles is in the Upper Province and 15¾ miles in the Lower." (Montreal, Dec. 3rd, 1833.)

In another report Mr. Mills says : "The St. Lawrence is opened two or three weeks earlier in the Spring and Fall than the Ottawa. The St. Lawrence passing through a more Southern latitude, these two or three weeks in Spring and Fall are the most important in the whole year for navigation traffic."

(I have transcribed the above Reports from the original manuscript, kindly shown me by Dr. Doughty, Dominion Archivist, at the Archives.)

The first sod was turned by Chief Justice Robinson in the Autumn of 1834, at a spot near the mouth of the old lock. Twenty-six contractors were awarded different sections. I will only mention a few : Robert and Wm. Hervey, Charles Kerr, Jas. Rogers, Jas. Dixon, Jas. Crawford, and Thompson, Simms, Fraser, and others. The engineers in charge were : Mr. J. B. Mills, Royal Engineer, and Mr. Benjamin Wright, of New York, as Consulting Engineer.

These gentlemen determined on the dimensions of the canal, as follows : Length, 11½ miles. Breadth at bottom, 100 feet ; breadth at top, 150 feet. Depth of water on sills, 9 feet. Number of locks, 7. Length of lock, 200 feet ; width, 45 feet. Total rise in lockage, 48 feet.

In March, 1836, Mr. Mills, resigned in consequence of disagreement between the Commissioners and himself, and Captain Philpotts, Royal Engineer, succeeded him.

Work was suspended in 1837, owing to the embarrassed state of Provincial finances, as well as the Rebellion, and was not resumed till after the Act uniting Upper and Lower Canada in 1841.

The canal was not completed until 1842, when it was opened for navigation. The steamboat "Highlander" was the first of the mail boats that passed up the canal.

The postal service in the newly settled part of Canada did not afford much facility for correspondence at that time. The carrying of letters by private individuals was punished by a fine, as it diminished the public revenue. Occasionally an order would be issued, warning the public, but notwithstanding this, friends would entrust their letters to parties who were travelling to places to which these letters were addressed, but in this primitive way they did not always reach their destination. Pringle, in his "History of Lunenburg," says: "When the old English Church in Cornwall was demolished, they found under one of the pews two letters that had been entrusted, sixty years previously, to a gentleman to be delivered to friends in Quebec. The high rate of postage had no doubt a great deal to do with the persistency of the people in sending their letters by friends." At that time the management of the Post Office in Canada was under the control of the Imperial Government, and remained so till 1850.

After the canal was opened for navigation, the people of the town found that having no access to the river except through the culvert, was intolerable. Petitions were sent to the Board of Public Works. The Hon. H. H. Killaly, President of the Board, came to Cornwall, and after an examination consented to build a bridge, which was completed in 1843.

The Cornwall Canal has had two periods of enlargement. In 1876, a new cut was made and two new locks were built South of the town, and completed in 1882. Between 1884 and 1903, the second period of enlargement took place, when the canal assumed the following dimensions: Length, 11 miles. Number of locks, 6. Dimensions of locks, 270 feet long by 45 wide. Total rise in lockage, 48 feet. Depth of water on sills, 14 feet. Breadth of canal at the bottom, 100 feet. Breadth of canal at water surface, 164 feet.

The equipment of the locks with electrical machinery was completed also in 1903. There are 230 arc lights situated along the bank of the canal; they are located 40 feet apart, which makes navigation at night as easy and pleasant as in day time. The equipment for opening and closing the gates, as well as the bridges, is operated by electricity. The hundreds of maple, elm, willow and birch trees on the South side, and the brilliant lights on the canal banks, make a decided contrast with the days of the origin of its construction.

The cost of the Cornwall Canal has been \$6,963,299.

Above the Town of Cornwall the New York & Ottawa Railway bridge may be seen. This is the only bridge spanning the St. Lawrence, which joins the United States to Canada.

The trip Westbound from Cornwall to Prescott by canal, gives a magnificent view of the river and rapids on the left, as well as numerous islands, and on the right is a beautiful landscape dotted with so many pretty villages, towns, and most charming and costly residences.

THE WILLIAMSBURG CANALS.

Williamsburg was named after William Henry, Duke of Clarence, who in 1831 ascended the Throne of England as William IV. He visited Canada in 1787.

These canals are situated on the North shore of the River St. Lawrence, and were constructed chiefly to overcome the "Galops" rapids and others of less importance, as well as certain stretches of swift water. Although called collectively the Williamsburg Canals, they are situated in three different counties—Stormont, Dundas and Grenville.

The first of the series, in ascending order, is Farran's Point, about four and a half miles West of Dickinson's Landing, the head of the Cornwall Canal. This canal was first built in 1847 for nine foot navigation. In 1897 a contract for enlargement was given, which was completed in October, 1902. The dimensions now are : Length of canal, $1\frac{1}{2}$ miles. Number of locks, 1. Length of lock, 800 feet, by 50 wide. Total rise in lockage, 4 feet. Depth of water on sills, 14 feet. Breadth of canal at bottom, 90 feet. Breadth of canal at water surface, 154 feet. This canal was extended to Empey's Bay.

Between Farran's Point and "Rapide Plat," or Morrisburg Canal, there is on the shore to the right as you ascend, a grey stone monument, which commemorates the Battle of Crysler's Farm. May I be here permitted a digression and allowed to recall the memory of those heroes of the Revolution of 1812-1813, who gave up their lives in defence of their country? It was on that very spot that on the 11th of November, 1813, the Battle of Crysler's Farm was fought between the British force of about 900 men under Colonel Morrison, and a portion of Wilkinson's army, between 2,000 and 3,000 strong, under General Covington. The British gained a complete and signal victory, and the Americans retreated with a loss of about 93 killed, among whom was General Covington, and 237 wounded. The victory at Crysler's Farm over Wilkinson's army, and that at Chateauguay under de Salaberry over General Hampton's force, completely broke up the well-conceived plan of the Americans for the capture of Montreal.

The second of the series is "Rapide Plat." This canal is situated about nine and a half miles West of Farran's Point, and extends from the pretty Town of Morrisburg to Flagg's Bay, almost opposite Ogden's Island—(an American island, noted for having been the scene of several skirmishes during the war of 1812-1814.) The first surveys of "Rapide Plat" were made in 1843; the works began in 1844 and were completed in 1847. This canal was intended for vessels drawing nine feet of water, and the enlargement to the 14 foot draught was commenced in 1884. The building of a new lock was completed in 1904. The dimensions of the canal are : Length, $3\frac{3}{4}$ miles. Number of locks, 2. Dimensions of locks, 270 feet long by 45 wide. Total rise of lockage, $11\frac{1}{2}$ feet. Depth of water on sills, 14 feet. Breadth of canal at bottom, 80 feet. Breadth of canal at surface of water, 152 feet.

From the head of "Rapide Plat" Canal to Point Iroquois, the distance is a little over four miles. Midway, opposite "Pine Tree Point," is the narrowest part in the whole of the river, from the Gulf of St. Lawrence to Niagara, being only 390 yards wide. One could hardly realize it possible, when travelling by boat and seeing this narrow stretch of water, that we are navigating on the largest river of our continent. Opposite Kingston, for instance, the width is $10\frac{3}{8}$ miles, from shore to shore. This part I am alluding to includes Wolfe Island.

The third division of the Williamsburg Canal embraces Iroquois and the "Galops." What is now known as the "Galops" Canal was originally built as two separate canals, with a short distance of navigation between; these were also opened for a nine foot navigation in 1847.

The lower section, called Point Iroquois Canal, commenced at the Village of Iroquois and extended to Presqu' Isle. It was three miles long and had a lockage of five feet seven inches, which overcame the rapid of Iroquois Point. This point is most picturesque and is said to have been a favorite spot with the Indians when holding their councils of war.

When Father Pierre Potier, one of the Jesuit Missionaries, was journeying from Montreal to Detroit in 1744, by canoe, he wrote in his diary the places of interest or landmarks that he passed from the 17th to the 21st of July. He noted that he had camped the night of the 17th at Iroquois Point, and remarked that it was "un bel endroit"—(a beautiful spot.)

The upper or Western section, known as the "Galops," commenced at the Village of Cardinal and extended up stream to the head of the "Galops" rapids. It had a lockage of six feet eight inches, and surmounted the Cardinal and the "Galops" rapids.

About ten years after the completion of these canals, they were connected by an embankment, otherwise called the "Junction Canal," built in the river, and other improvements were made, so as to increase the total length of the canal to $7\frac{1}{2}$ miles and the lockage to 14 feet 7 inches.

In 1888 the Government entered into a contract for enlarging the upper entrance, the work consisting of building a new lift-lock, as well as a guard-lock, each 270 feet long by 45 feet wide.

In 1897 work on the enlargement of the Iroquois section was commenced and consisted in building a new entrance channel, two entrance piers, and a "flottila" lock of 800 feet by 50 feet wide, thus deepening and widening the canal for about three and a half miles. An electrical cable was also placed under the canal, and the work was completed in 1902.

In 1898 it was decided to widen the entrance to the existing channel, South or towards Adams Island, with a view to eventually increasing the width to 300 feet, which is now completed.

The cost of the Williamsburg Canals is \$9,567,077.

The North channel commences about one mile West of the upper entrance of the Galops Canal, and extends in a straight line to Chimney Island, a distance of two and one-third miles.

One of the most romantic incidents in connection with this portion of the St. Lawrence is the story of Chimney Island, which was connected with the French and Indian war with the British in 1760.

It was in August, 1759, that the Marquis de Levis (later the successor of Montcalm), who commanded the French forces from Montreal, Westward, ascended the St. Lawrence in order to make a careful inspection of the defenses. He examined Fort La Presentation (now Ogdensburg) and found it was not suitable as regards the prevention of the enemy. He accordingly determined to build a much stronger fort on the Island of Orakoninton, an Indian name which de Levis vouches in his journal as meaning "Le Soleil Suspendu," or the "Hanging Sun." De Levis re-named this island "Isle Royale."

Desandrions, the local Militia Engineer, laid out the line of fortification, and work was commenced immediately and prosecuted throughout the winter, and gave the name of "Levis" to the fort.

The command of the fort was given to Pouchot, a very brave and skilful soldier, who had already distinguished himself at Niagara. His forces consisted of 200 strong, 100 militiamen, and several hundred Indians under Abbé Piquet, the celebrated missionary Jesuit from the abandoned post, Fort La Presentation (Ogdensburg), who had removed all their guns and stores to the large island below Orakoninton. Levis had given this island the name of "Ovaratory," in honor of the chief in command.

On the 10th of August, General Amherst embarked his army, composed of 10,000 regular troops and 700 Indians, at Oswego, in an enormous boat and several batteaux, en route to Montreal, and reached the Island of Orakoninton, or "Isle Royale," as de Levis had called it, on the 19th of the same month. He made an attack upon the fort. Pouchot refused to surrender and made a vigorous fight. Amherst was obliged to undertake regular siege operations. On the 22nd the British batteries again opened fire, which was so heavy that Pouchot surrendered on the 25th of August, 1760. Amherst completely destroyed the fort, leaving only the chimney standing.

On the 7th of September, Amherst reached Montreal, and the following day the Marquis of Vaudreuil (then Governor) signed the capitulation, which severed Canada from France.

Only the charred ruins and a solitary chimney is left to mark the spot. The latter has stood for many, many years, as a landmark, giving to the island upon which it had been erected the name it still bears, "Chimney Island."

This island was purchased a couple of years ago from the American Government (for it lies in American waters) by Mr. M. E. Cleveland, the contractor for the North Channel and portion of the "Galops" Canal.

There is another island above Brockville, near Gananoque, which also bears the name of "Chimney Island," and for this reason has been confounded more than once by modern historical writers with the "Chimney Island" I have just described.

(These notes are authentic, having been secured from the archives of the Jesuit Order in Montreal, who have in their possession most of the original manuscripts relating to Canada, where their missions were conducted during the French regime.)

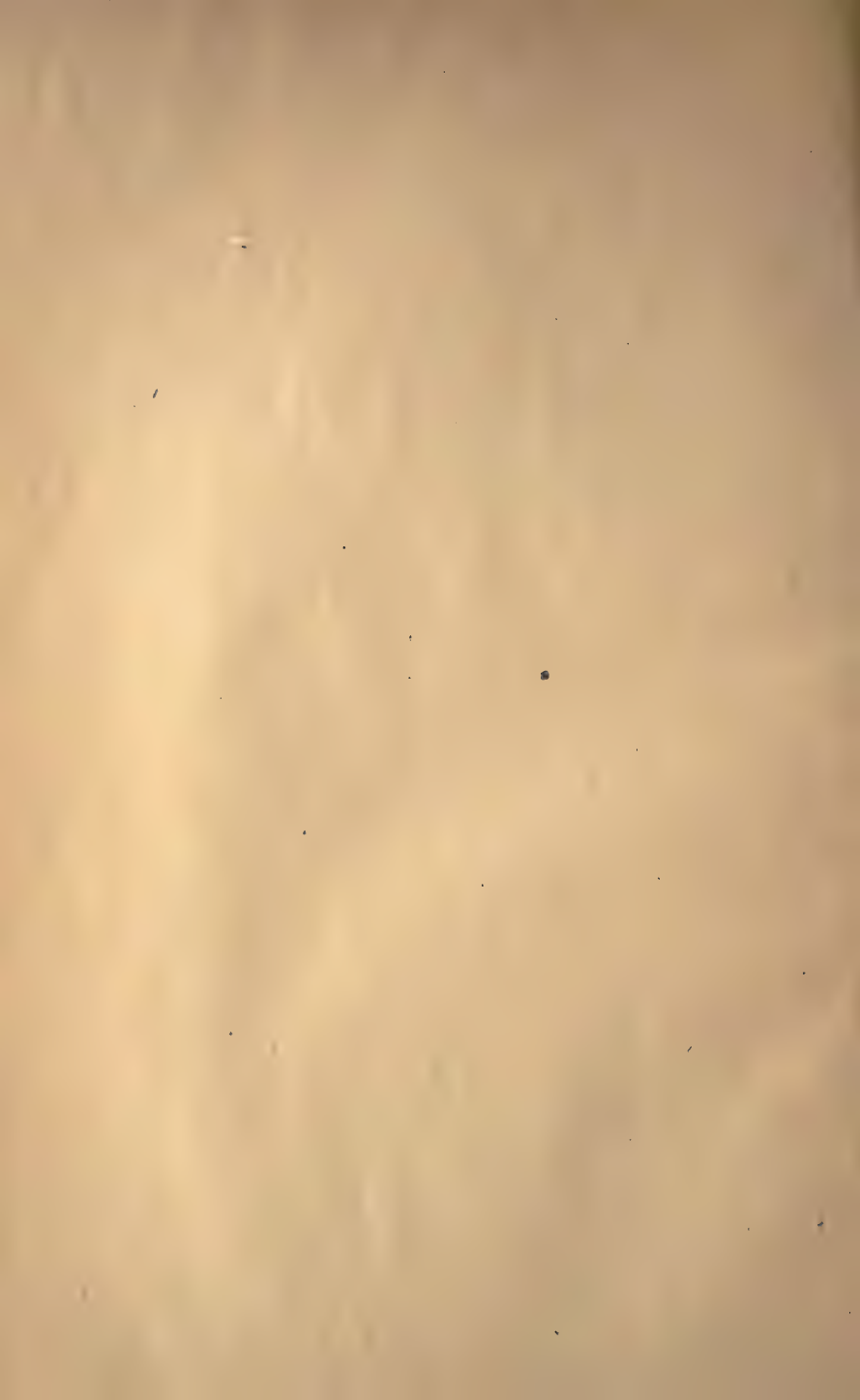
The present degree of perfection in our canals was not attained at one bound, as they had several periods. The history of each one would require a very extended notice, if the military, political, commercial and financial aspect of the question, as well as the engineering difficulties, were to be considered. Suffice it to say, that our present engineers and explorers are only following in the footsteps of the men of genius and science, who first blazed the pathway to the interior of our country and made the great St. Lawrence River the highway of our national transportation. The results of their intelligent and patient labor are enjoyed by us to-day, and we should therefore be proud of them and our common country, which have produced such men.

C. E. RHÉAUME.



What do you suppose these pages are
for?













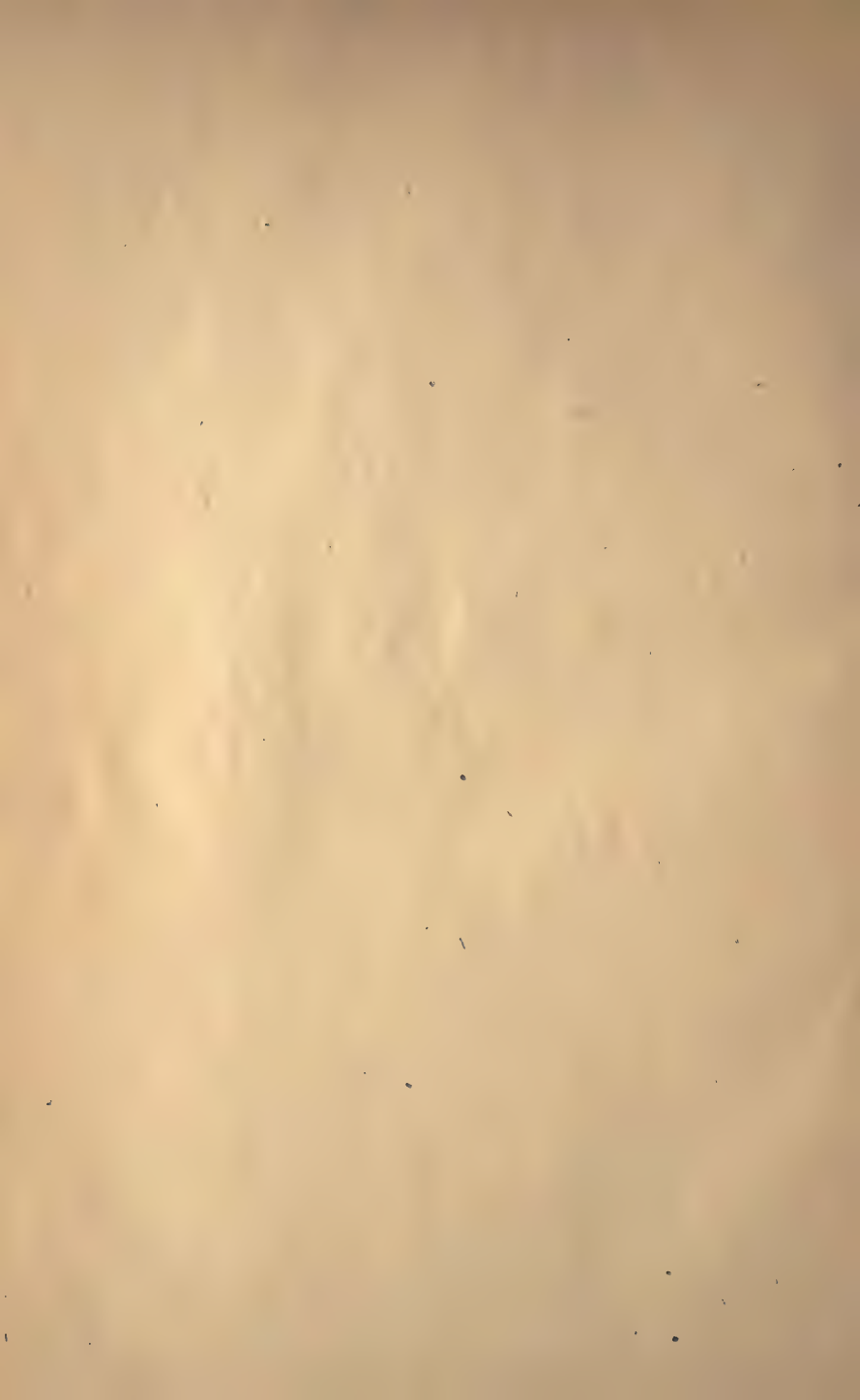




















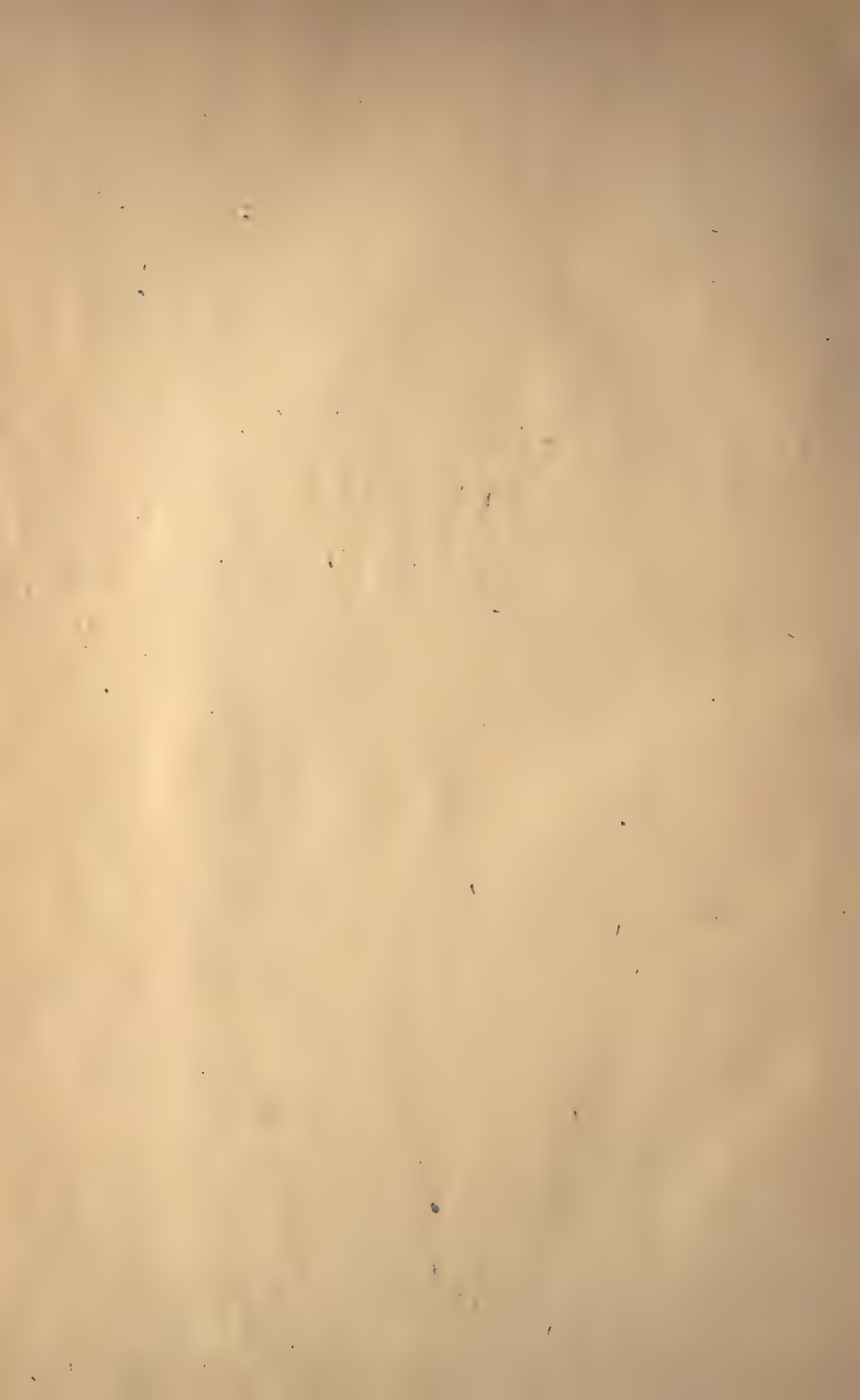
















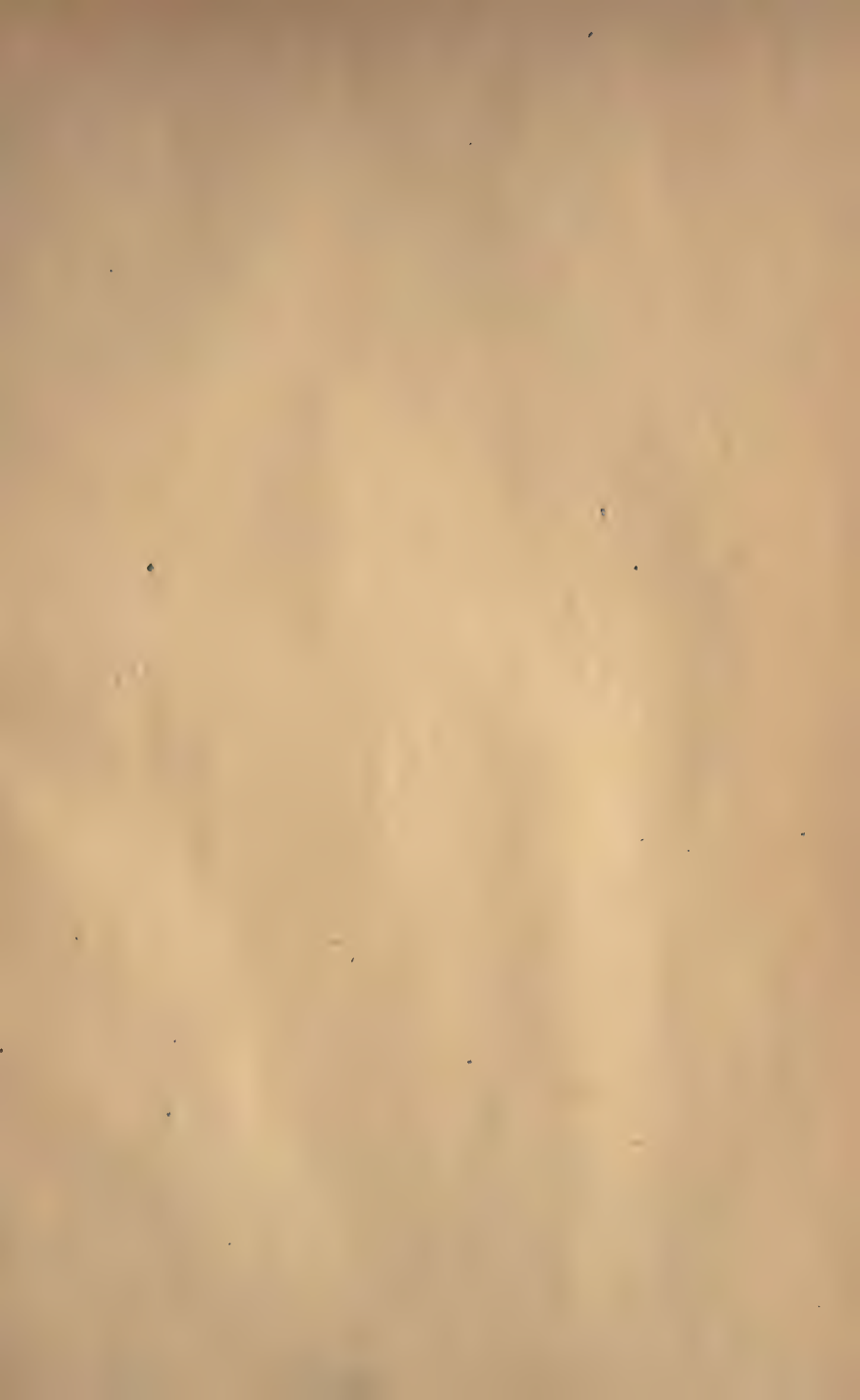




















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